

# The Diagram Paradigm

## *Byzantium, the Islamic World, and the Latin West*

DUMBARTON OAKS SYMPOSIUM, 20–21 APRIL 2018

JEFFREY HAMBURGER, DAVID ROXBURGH, and LINDA SAFRAN, Symposiarchs

Long discredited as inadequate illustrations of thought processes more appropriately represented in algebraic or verbal terms, diagrams have enjoyed a renaissance across numerous disciplines—from philosophy and computer science to the burgeoning field of graphics—as a means of visualizing knowledge.

As the historical disciplines take a fresh look at diagrams, this symposium sought to offer an interdisciplinary, comparative, and cross-cultural perspective, considering the range of diagrams in Byzantium, Europe, and the Islamic world. Its cross-cultural approach aimed to decenter the bodies of scholarly work that focus on only one of these three traditions, within which it remains all too easy to take particular uses of diagrams for granted.

Among the questions our symposium posed were: Why are diagrams relatively sparse (and certainly understudied) in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds? Why are they rarely adopted as vehicles of religious thought? What role do diagrams play in the development and documentation of scientific thought across the three traditions? How does the diagrammatic mode relate to artistic practice? To cartography? To science? To literature? To the school curriculum? Why is so much of “Western” medieval art diagrammatic in character, but so little of Byzantine and Islamic art? How do attitudes toward diagrams change over time? And how do the three traditions interact with one another?

FRIDAY, 20 APRIL

### INTRODUCTIONS

Chair: Ruth Macrides, University of Birmingham

#### *Byzantine Diagrams*

Linda Safran, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies

#### *Islamic Diagrams*

David Roxburgh, Harvard University

#### *Western Medieval Diagrams*

Jeffrey Hamburger, Harvard University

### DIAGRAMMING SCIENCE

Chair: John Duffy, Harvard University

#### *Between Diagram and Image: On Jubal's Lyre*

Benjamin Anderson, Cornell University

#### *Byzantine-Islamic Scientific Culture in the Astronomical*

*Diagrams of Chioniades on John of Damascus*

Alexandre M. Roberts, Columbia University

#### DIAGRAMMING NUMBERS AND LETTERS

Chair: Ioli Kalavrezou, Harvard University

*Diagrams and Denumeratio: Engendering  
a Numerate Eye in Medieval Europe*

Megan McNamee, Center for Advanced Study  
in the Visual Arts, Washington, DC

*Diagramming the Diagrammatic in Twelfth-  
Century Europe*

Adam S. Cohen, University of Toronto

*Illustrations or Diagrams? Figures in Medieval  
Arabic and Persian Calligraphic Treatises*

Nourane Ben Azzouna, Université de Strasbourg

#### SATURDAY, APRIL 21

#### DIAGRAMMING COSMOLOGY

Chair: Dimiter Angelov, Harvard University

*Concentric Celestial Spheres and Their  
Visual Representations in the Twelfth  
and Early Thirteenth Centuries*

Barbara Obrist, CNRS, Paris

*A World of Embedded Spheres: Cosmological Diagrams  
in Late Byzantine Manuscripts (12th–15th Centuries)*

Anne-Laurence Caudano, University of Winnipeg

#### DIAGRAMMING THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Chair: Derek Krueger, University of North  
Carolina at Greensboro

*The Prophet Muhammad's 'Ayn Seal: A Safavid-  
Period Diagram as Cosmic Catharsis*

Christiane Gruber, University of Michigan

*Diagrams in Byzantine Philosophical Manuscripts:  
Plato, Aristotle, and Their Commentators*

Lutz Koch, Berlin-Brandenburgische

Akademie der Wissenschaften

#### CONCLUSION

Chair: Robert Ousterhout, University of Pennsylvania

Response to the Papers

Jeffrey Hamburger, Harvard University